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Editorial comments

by Louigi Addario-Berry, pop culture co-ordinator

When I finish all the requisite editing for this pop culture issue, when all the revisions and alterations have been made, the pages have been laid out, printed up, and the courier has been sent along his merry way, I'll trudge eastward. Eastward I'll go, across the McGill campus. Through the McGill ghetto, then past Park, Jeanne Mance, St. Urbain. I arrive at St. Laurent.

Here, lights and noise assail my tired and oversensitive eyes, ears, and likely, unless I'm lucky enough to avoid the tobacco smoke wafting out of every bar, my nose and throat.

Friday night. Everything's happening here: people party, listen to music, drink, smoke (up, more than occasionally), and as the

night slowly comes to an end, return to their homes, hopefully in pairs, sometimes alone, to sleep off the effects.

By this time, however, I'm long since gone, having boarded a northbound bus for my home, far from even longest and most sinuous tendrils of the Montréal night scene. Before I go to bed, however, I too have musical temptations which must be indulged. My roommate has in his possession the new Vanilla Ice CD, and undoubtedly this will lure me to his room, to listen to a few tracks, before my head finally hits the pillow. It doesn't matter that I don't like Vanilla Ice ... I'll still listen.

Where does pop culture fit into all this? How many people's Saturday night does a given band, movie, or drug have to be a part of before it becomes a part of "popular" culture?

One of the few statements that can be made with minimal argument about pop culture is that which is inherent in its title - it's popular. It's mainstream. Everyone knows it, and - usually - a majority likes it. The mainstream press covers it, and the alternative press has already given up on it, because, by now, it's waaaaay too mainstream.

This brings to mind the question: why is the Daily running a pop culture special issue? We're not exactly the campus paper to look to if you want to know the spin on all the latest and greatest one-hit wonders, after all. Nor do we want to be.

The idea behind running a pop culture issue was to take a critical look at some of the prevailing forces behind today's pop culture in all its mediums, whether that be television, music, film, the internet, or any of the infinite ways in which it manifests.

The term "pop culture" does not represent a static force or phenomenon. Nor can it be defined, or encapsulated, in a few short sentences (though this was exactly the fate to which we subjected the poor victims of our "pop" quiz...). Or in 16 pages ... or in a book, for that matter...

This issue certainly isn't pop culture. But hopefully it will give you pause to think over a few things perhaps you hadn't thought about before. Which is, I guess, what the Daily's all about.

by James Yap, pop culture co-ordinator

Nobody knows what pop culture is.

That's not intended to be a comment on the ignorance of the general populace; rather, it is an acknowledgement of the breadth and depth of meaning of the term, and of the fact that it means many different things to many different people. The fact is, pop culture has its own different meaning to everyone, and for everyone its meaning is difficult to express in words.

As co-ordinator of the pop culture special issue, before sitting down and thinking about what I wanted to do and put into it, I had to decide what it should be all about. But you can't decide what a pop culture special issue should be about before first deciding what pop culture is all about. And so I came up with my own concise (very concise!) definition of pop culture.

How's this for a definition... culture includes all the activities a person engages in which are not work- or survival-related, and pop culture is culture that is popular. In most people's heads, it's probably fair to say that pop culture usually refers to forms of expression, be they art or media. Television, music, film, visual arts, and the internet are examples of this. Of course, pop culture is not exclusively forms of expression - drugs and sports could also be considered part of pop culture.

Another idea that is often associated with pop culture is that it is "mainstream" culture. And unfortunately, due to the way our society works, anything that is

"mainstream" is automatically (and often rightfully) associated in people's minds with commercialization. And commercialization is a horrible thing.

So why, you ask, is the McGill Daily doing a special issue on pop culture?

First of all, pop culture is such a fundamental element of our society, and so visible in everything we do, that it is something that simply cannot be ignored. To not accord it the importance which it deserves would be foolish and improper. Besides, no one has anything against certain things being more popular than others, the problem lies when people start blindly following current trends and corporations begin to start exploiting these trends. The Daily takes pride in being able to appreciate anything that is artful or has a thoughtful underlying message, and to do this while at

the same time dismissing pop culture just because of its mainstream associations would be hypocritical.

Second, this issue is meant to be a critical look at pop culture, the state it's in and the effects of its role in our society today. It is not in any way meant to tell you about the successes of the latest mainstream films or CDs and the such; there are plenty of other newspapers and magazines around to do that.

So this is the reason the Daily has decided to put together a pop culture special issue. No, we are not selling out... rest assured, you can still expect to see the same quality content from The McGill Daily Culture you have come to expect week after week. But we also think it might be worthwhile to take a step back and analyze this important part of our society's identity.

The McGill Daily

volume 88 number 30

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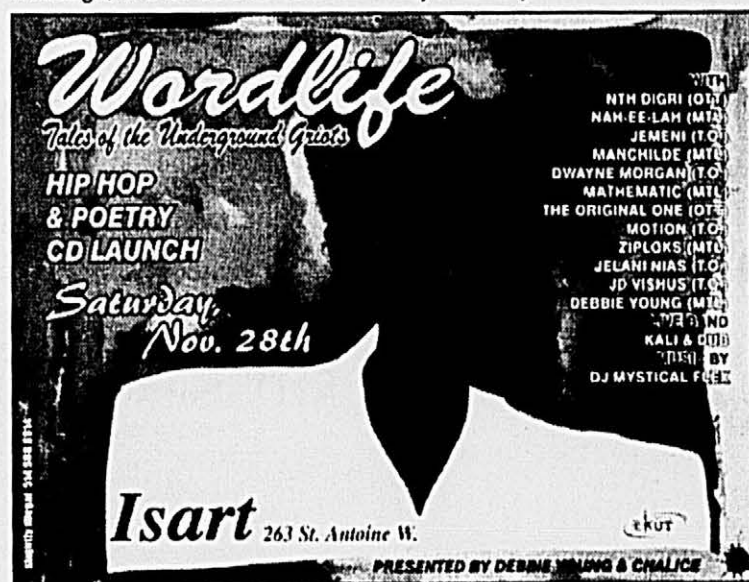


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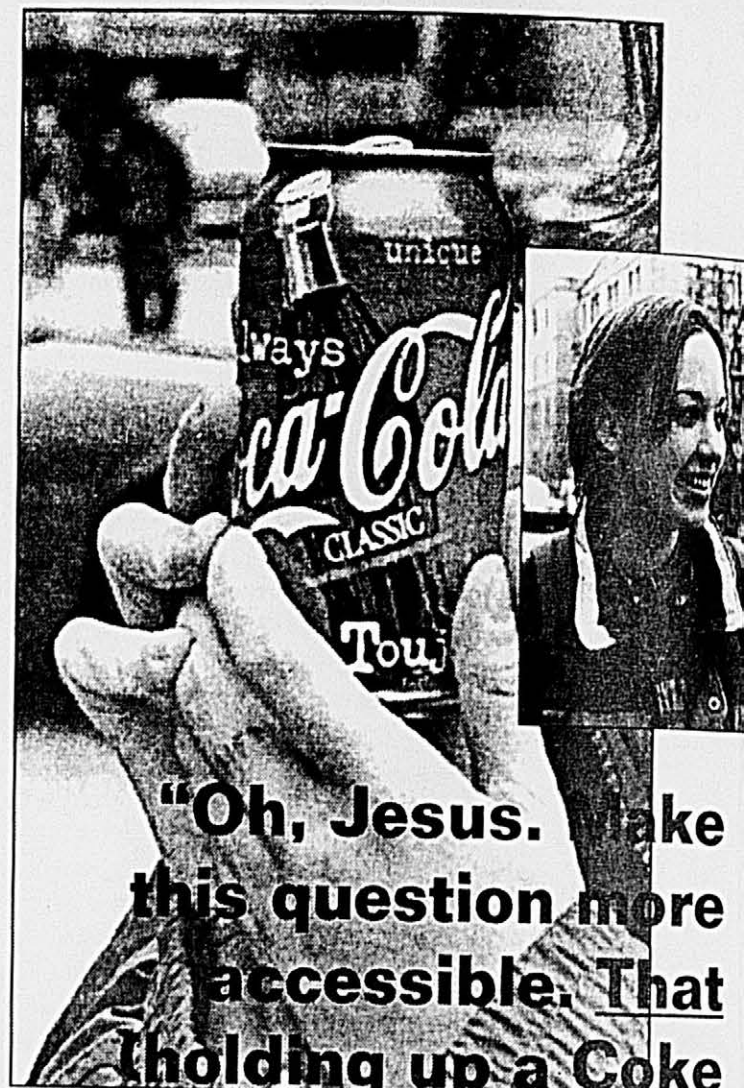
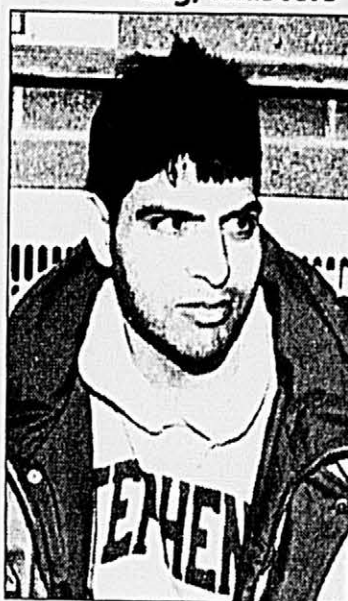
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Dinesh Sharma
Chemical Engineering, Masters



"Oh, Jesus. Make this question more accessible. That (holding up a Coke can) is pop culture."

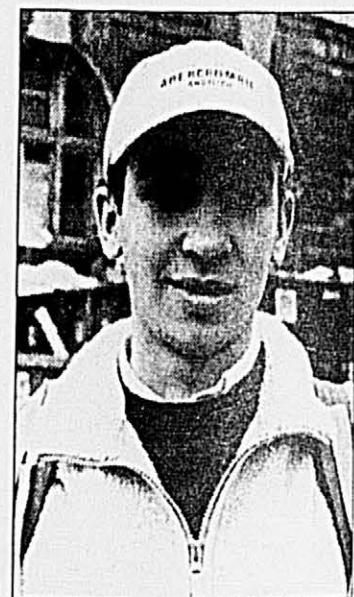
Laura Breznay,
Cultural Studies, U2

"I think the Trib is pop culture. Not so much what you need, kind of what you want, kind of not. It's just there.



Titanic is pop culture, and Madonna ... but Madonna's more than that."

Meg Hewings,
Woman's Studies, U2



"It's to do with the youth...what the youth look up to and listen to."

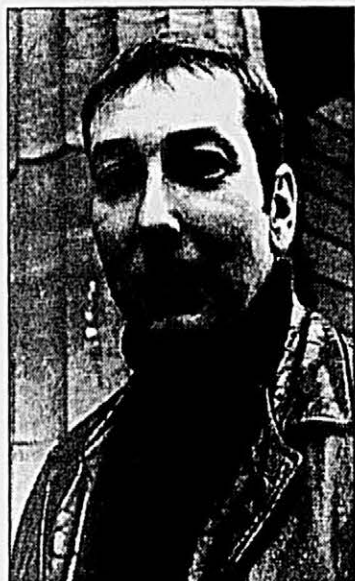
Tak Graham, Arts, U0

Quiz

PHOTOS BY CÉLINE HEINBECKER

"WHAT IS POP CULTURE?"

"That presupposes you know what culture is. If I had an answer to that, I could give you an easy definition. I guess you could just say it's what's cool, what you do on a Saturday night, but that's different. There are too many ways to answer that question."



Professor
Trevor
Ponech,
Department
of English



"Pop culture is trendy culture: it's recent movies, music, drama ... just recent goings on."

Cecilia Tolley,
Science, U2

"All that mainstream crap that came out of the sixties. And the UK."

Rhys Berry, Economics, U3



"I don't know."

Alex Pinchette, Electrical
Engineering, U2

Janet Wolff

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UK Cinema: Things Looking Up?

DESPITE THE LURE OF HOLLYWOOD MONEY, THE OVERALL OUTLOOK FOR THE BRITISH FILM INDUSTRY REMAINS BRIGHT

by Joe Butler

Ever since Britain's new post-Socialist government came to power 18 months ago, Prime Minister Tony Blair and his colleagues have been eager to promote what they, in their hip wisdom, refer to as Cool Britannia. In spite of the embarrassing tag imposed upon modern British pop culture (outdated before it had even been used) and the interference of the establishment in areas it should perhaps leave alone, it cannot be denied that the mid-1990s have seen a dramatic resurgence in British creativity. In the theatre, Mark Ravenhill's ground-breaking *Shopping and F**king* had audiences so stunned they never even noticed the sound of springing seats as fellow spectators left auditoriums in disgust. The musical scene has been in such good shape over the past few years that when Britpop died, nobody even noticed the gap left in its wake.

It has been in the cinema, however, that Britain has seen some of its most resounding successes. After decades as the laughingstock of world cinema, the British film industry reinvented itself and quickly regained credibility amongst critics and cinema-goers alike. Huge international blockbusters such as *The Full Monty* did much of the horn-blowing, but smaller independent productions also achieved considerable success.

Danny Boyle (of *Trainspotting* fame), one of the decade's most successful directors, has been the focus of much of the praise directed towards the industry in Britain yet is now facing allegations of selling out. His last film, *A Life Less Ordinary*, moved away from the intrinsic Scottishness of his first two features, and in his next picture, the director intends to ditch fellow Scot and collaborator on each of his projects to date,

and - let's face it - more talented actors more than willing to work for you unless big-time world (i.e. US) success is not your main goal?

So is British cinema only British so long as it is unsuccessful? A depressing hypothesis certainly, but not necessarily inaccurate. Historically, there has been a constant stream of European cinematic defections to the US (Hitchcock, von Sternberg, Malle) and Hollywood's penchant for bland, dumbed-down nonsense appears now to be crossing the Atlantic. *Bean*, one of Britain's biggest international hits of recent years, succeeded merely by appealing to the lowest common denominator. The success of *The Full Monty*, the UK's highest ever grosser, would have been far less likely without the much-hyped promise of portraying actors and actresses in various degrees of disrobement. Many British cinemas screened the film again this summer as a treat for bored housewives neglected by their husbands in favour of the soccer World Cup. Indeed, if the public had been particularly interested in a social commentary upon the legacy of the Thatcher years, it would have been better advised to trade in its ticket for *Brassed Off*, again starring the ubiquitous McGregor. Although a little naïve at times, Mark Herman's humorous take on the miners' strike of the mid-80s was universally accessible and had charm by the bucketload. Not much stripping going on though.

Nevertheless, one strand of British cinematic tradition appears to have resisted temptation to americanize. The Bond movies, a genre in themselves and currently enjoying something of a renaissance, are as British now as they ever were. It would surely be unwise to base an entire industry on nostalgia, however, as the disastrous *Carry on*

Columbus proved so embarrassingly.

On the other hand, perhaps the picture is not so bleak. For nearly 25 years, throughout the drought in Brit films, Mike Leigh has been flying the flag for his country. Some of his best work to date surfaced this decade, particularly the masterful *Secrets and Lies* for which Leigh and his leading actress, the sublime Brenda Blethyn, won best director and actress respectively at Cannes. Last year's *Career Girls* had a lot - ultimately too much - to live up to, but was nevertheless a pretty decent film.

As is the case in Canada, Britain is home to several racial and religious minority groups and *My Son the Fanatic*, Hanif Kureishi's recent foray into Islamic fundamentalism and the tensions between first- and second-generation immigrants, is arguably far more a part of the "British experience" (if such a thing exists) than Boyle's *A Life Less Ordinary*, for example. Someone does need to tell Rachel "Muriel's Wedding" Griffiths that her Bradford accent was fooling no one, however.

One advantage that the emerging "new wave" of British cinema has over its stateside counterpart is its rejection of self-imposed geographical limitation. Unlike the US, where Hollywood is the movie industry, the Brits avoid such exclusivity of location. The films already discussed have been produced

across England and Scotland. Again, Wales plays its part and last year's *Twin Town* enjoyed reasonable success, albeit only on a domestic scale. *Titanic Town*, the similarly titled Northern Irish feature which was presented as part

of the official selection at this year's Montréal International Film Festival, is a less partisan exploration of the "Northern Irish Problem" than many previous films which have covered similar ground.

Perhaps the highlight of the last year's UK cinematic output, however, is Gary Oldman's directorial debut *Nil by Mouth*.

This sensitive

but non-sentimental depiction of a battered wife, based on Oldman's own mother, was brought to life by the superbly talented Kathy Burke (another award winner at Cannes). It stunned audiences in Britain and abroad, despite the barriers of the cockney slang dialect spoken throughout.

It is a well-known fact that Oldman is an established Hollywood figure as a result of his acting career. Will he too follow in Boyle's footsteps and leave Britain's small-time film scene behind in favour of the glitz and glamour of Tinseltown? One can only hope not, but even if he does, there is still plenty of British talent without the desire (or, more pessimistically, the opportunity) to head for Hollywood. And to be fair, while the Americans continue to produce such excrement as *Lost in Space* or the woefully insensitive *Sliding Doors*, the Brits have little to fear.



THROUGHOUT THE DROUGHT IN BRIT CINEMA, DIRECTOR MIKE LEIGH HAS BEEN CARRYING THE FLAG FOR HIS COUNTRY.

Ewan McGregor. He does so in favour of - who else - pretty-faced boy of the moment, Leonardo DiCaprio. In a recent interview with Zoë Heller, McGregor was far from reluctant in admitting his disappointment that Boyle has pulled the plug on their successful partnership and seems intent on selling his soul to the devil. Without wanting to make money too much of an issue, setting aside 50% of the film's budget in order to meet his new star's salary demands seems symptomatic of Boyle's increasingly Hollywoodian priorities. Why else opt for Leo when there are scores of far cheaper

A Lewd Proposal

COMMENTS ON WRITING ABOUT CINEMA AS A MEDIUM

by Neil Verma

It's a secret that I write a film column in the Daily, because I think it's kind of stupid to be a student writing film reviews. My writing is so bad that I won't even line my bird cage with it. However, this disappointment gives me ample excuse for indulging in rich foods, so I manufacture it intentionally.

Secrets are only fun if you tell them.

FACT: The city of Los Angeles alone produces double the number of pornographic features per year than the Hollywood-based studios you probably hate.

The more I read film criticism, the more I imagine that my counterparts in real newspapers also enjoy rich foods. Pop critics are divided into two camps of vermin: those who use a highly specialized language to get themselves in between quotation marks on the poster for the latest James Cameron film; and those who refuse to see the latest James Cameron film on the basis of those ads. In light of the fact that sixty or seventy percent of the feature-length films produced in any given year in North America are porns that go straight to video, I suggest that both camps of vermin entirely neglect the largest and most cross-cultural genre ever created. I'm not suggesting that the Globe and Mail include a review of the latest sequel in the *Sweet Lucy Fucks Five Hundred Cops and a Dog Named Doo-Doo* film saga. I merely bring this up to illustrate that neither "pop" nor "alternative" critics address any more than a minor wing of the medium.

FACT: Hollywood movies are more important than Alternative

movies.

Alternative and foreign films only get released on screen in Canada if they win some hefty silverware at Cannes, Sundance or Venice. You are not seeing or even hearing about the seven hundred movies that did not get screened that week at the Parc, or the thousand or so film-student pieces of shit that were so masturbatory and self-indulgent that they couldn't even convince New Line to release them. In this way, the very critics who complain about the artistic poverty of Hollywood censor the number of alternative or foreign films you encounter to a minute fragment of their total number.

It is so much easier for us to despise the big studios. MGM's bad films fail in public. Independent bad films fail in secrecy. Ergo: our impression that Independent films are more worthwhile is based on a misconception of the genre.

MYTH: The slam-em-bang-em high adventure melodrama is mindless.

I secretly suspect that this is an opinion that finds its roots in that sad demographic of people who played football or soccer when they should have been at the movies like any decent ten year old. The action film is the most examined and sophisticated kind of sequence in film history. The western, the science fiction and the disaster movie are institutions that have been used by some of the best minds in the medium, from Hitchcock to Coppola to Scorsese to Kazan to Bergman. The Parc Guide often calls *Casablanca* the best Hollywood film ever made, but what

you probably don't know is that Michael Curtiz, its director, made exclusively action films both before and after *Casablanca*.

Cry and bemoan *Titanic* as you do, it still has the most elaborate and ambitious destruction sequence ever photographed. This is an artistic feat. You can hate the movie until the end of time, but you can't change that.

In general, the reason why I prefer Hollywood films to Independent ones is that Hollywood has the funding and resources that no Independent can match. These resources made *Batman*, *the Godfather*, *Vertigo*, *Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cool Hand Luke*, *Chinatown*, *Casablanca*, *The Birth of a Nation*, *Gone With The Wind*, *Sunset Boulevard* and a thousand other movies you love but would feel guilty about loving if they came out now. These movies built the post WWII film language that every contemporary director must acknowledge. Every foreign and Independent film maker's artistry stands in relationship with Hollywood artistry. No exceptions.

Quote: "The age of photography, of the photographic image, and thus of cinema itself, is coming to an end. At the end of this era, before entering the age of the digital-electronic image, cinema may be able to gather its forces one more time and do that for which it was invented: pro-

vide the people of the 20th century with an image of themselves, both of their reality and their dreams" - Wim Wenders in a speech delivered when accepting the F. W. Murnau Award, 1991.



Now that film is beginning to no longer be celluloid photography, and now that graphic design and production technology have embraced the synthetic image, celluloid is absolved of its old responsibilities. For five years it has been possible to digitize old Bogart films so comprehensively that we might someday see a new Bogart film starring completely digitized man now fifty years dead. Digital-electronic movies, like any young medium, is struggling to find its grammar, the language which will define its use. Make no mistake, buddy o' mine, high tech movies are an entirely different medium than film.

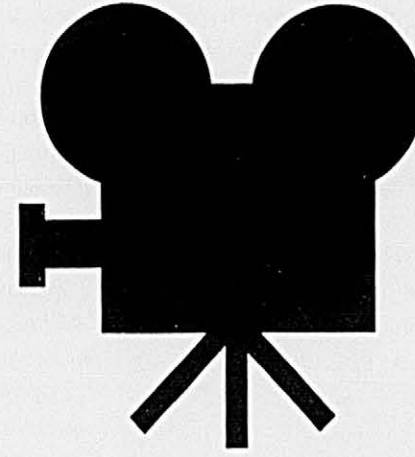
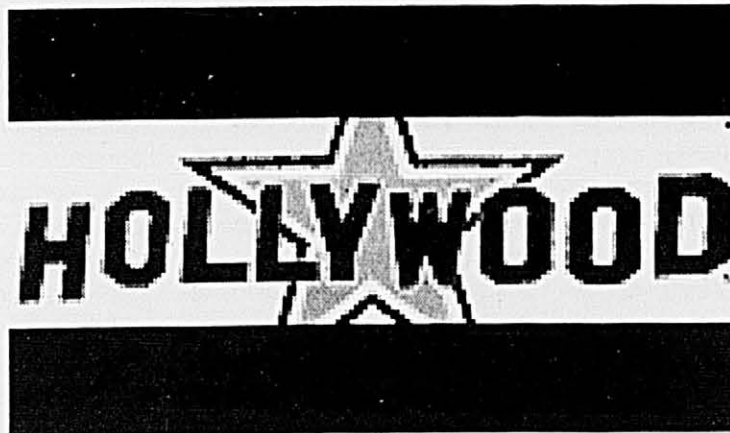
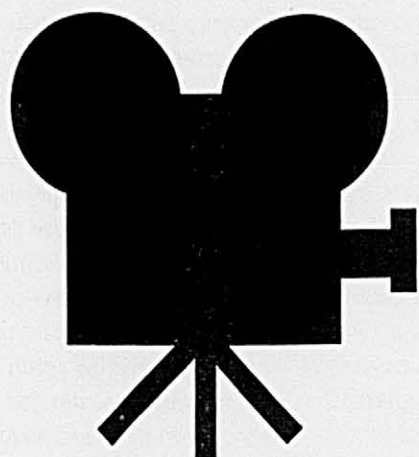
Meanwhile, celluloid is left without its old responsibilities to the public. The ethical debates around images will move away from the technology of celluloid and toward the technology of electronic synthesis. When a medium is left with its cheese out in the wind, that medium may choose to fade to irrelevancy, or use its newfound freedom to

break its own grammatical rules.

This is an article about breaking the rules. In thinking about film, we need not crawl into the alternative critic's trench, nor upon the pop critic's pulpit. We can place ourselves in the film idiom with some irony, a little bit of tenderness and some good, strong, self-flagellating humour.

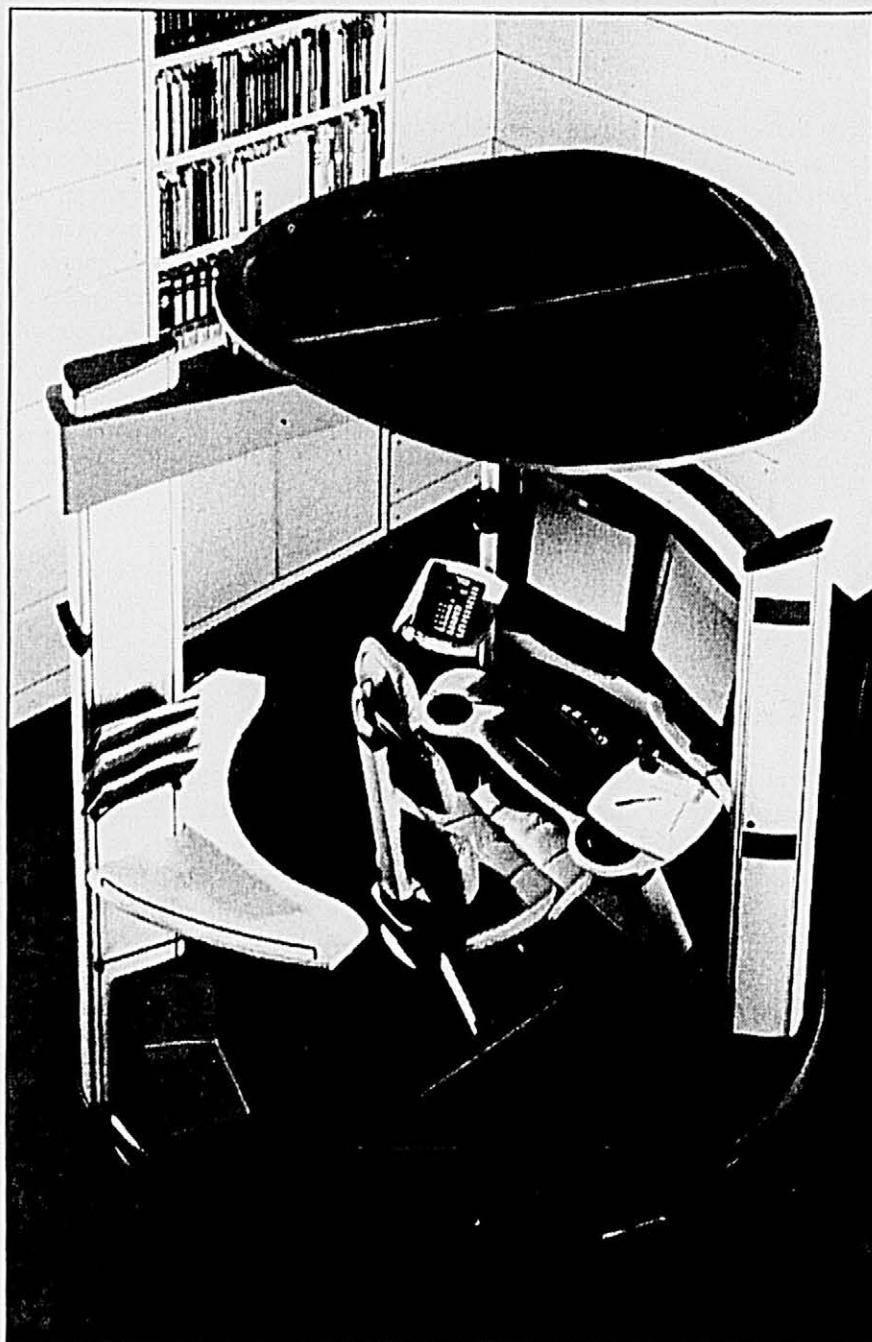
Write about movies, by all means. But don't write as if you were the mouthpiece of the Western Canon, or the Cinematic Tradition, or the Oracle of Aesthetic Pedagogy. Writing about a movie is writing about yourself. About how you came to it and what you got from it. Why do we have to be so serious now while the last of the analog technologies is fading into the digital earth? Have some fun at the wake, compadre, or you're insulting all the fun we've had. Don't feel guilty about being excited by *Face / Off* or *Armageddon*. Nobody's going to chastise you for it. Promise.

So tell a couple secrets and wheeze a couple times when you're writing about the movies. 'Cause, the films you see do not really represent the medium, neglecting as they do the vast majority of Independents and the towering genre of pornography. They do not conform to any school of critics. Our movies are censored and dying and kicking and flailing as they syncretize with a new scary digital medium. So talk about your reality, your feelings and your dreams when you talk about a movie, then sit back and enjoy the pastiche. It goes well with rich foods.



Point, Click, and Rage Against the Machine

by Jon Bricker



THE LUDDITE NIRVANA

“That attitude is not hard to come to. You go through a heavy industrial area of a large city and there it all is, the technology. In front of it are high barbed-wire fences, locked gates saying NO TRESPASSING, and beyond, through sooty air, you see ugly, strange shapes of metal and brick whose purpose is unknown, and whose master you will never see. What it's for you don't know, and why it's there there's no one to tell, and so all you can feel is alienated, estranged, as though you didn't belong there. Who owns and understands this doesn't want you around. All this technology has somehow made you a stranger in your own land. Its very shape and appearance and mysteriousness say, 'Get out.' You know there's an explanation somewhere and what it's doing undoubtedly serves mankind in some indirect way but that isn't what you see. What you see is the No Trespassing, Keep Out signs and not anything serving people, but little people, like ants, serving these strange, incomprehensible shapes.” - Robert M.

Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

Get home. Log on. Check e-mail. Open forwarded message. Click on cyber-paper clip to open attachment. Played out before you is an office's black and white security footage, a stuffed and starched shirt and tie, middle-aged, paper pusher who, with a few solid raps to the side of his PC monitor, awaits the remedy to some system problem. Unsatisfied with his repair efforts, enraged, screaming, he lifts his keyboard and launches it at the monitor, shattering it and knocking it to the ground before kicking it across an office floor. Ned Ludd's revival. A violent and telling expression of machine-induced frustration to the message's sympathizing recipients. Man versus machine—and here, its battlefield, electronic mail.

It is not without a sense of this irony that Luddism has become “Neo'd” in a revival of the Nineteenth Century movement that met the Industrial Revolution with its own violent revolt.

Today's Luddite however, finds

himself identifying a plethora of new concerns. In his book *Rebels Against the Future*, Neo-Luddite thinker Kirkpatrick Sale identifies Ludditic trends in the current campaigns of Asbestos Victims of America, of French farmers opposing GATT, and the Green movement. Perhaps most shocking is Sale's linking of the Ludditic revival with the manifesto of the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski.

North America's indigenous people, radical environmental, anti-nuclear, and anti-animal testing activists, those devastated by the Love Canal, and the Exxon Valdez, and even those frustrated with the perceived threats to privacy posed by the growing prevalence of computer technology at

home and work, Sale says, add to the growing ranks of Neo-Luddites. Nonetheless, you would be hard done by to seek a professed member of the Neo-Luddite movement today. For that matter, you'd be hard pressed to find a movement at all.

Essentially a “dis-organization,” today's Luddites take on a markedly more faceless approach than did their subversive, technoravaging ancestors. They have no assemblies, and few thinkers or authors who deem themselves Luddites: an invisibility which, though softening calls for withdrawal from techno-culture, seems imperative to the Luddist nature. It is against the very tools which establish movements after all, that they seem to be rebelling. And indeed, my own research noted an unsurprising absence of mainstream attention afforded to Neo-Luddism.

“I don't see any evidence of a movement of that kind,” says Michael Smith, who professors a Technology and Society course in McGill's Sociology Department. “Some people just have some question with the way technology

is going.”

As Sale has it though, the overriding principles which deny attention to Luddism in the mainstream media nonetheless merit heed. In his *Lessons from the Luddites*, he offers industrialization as a “cataclysmic” leap valuing nothing more green than a dollar.

The role of Luddism called into question, he comes to speak of the imperative of a voice of moral reason against industrialization. “Such a challenge is mounted against large enemies and powerful forces not because there is any certainty of triumph, but because somewhere in the blood, in the place inside where pain and fear and anger intersect, one is finally moved to refusal and defiance: ‘No More,’” writes Sale.

“The ways of resisting the industrial monoculture can be as myriad as the machines against which they are aimed and as varied as the individuals carrying them out, as the many Neo-Luddite manifestations around the world make clear,” he says, noting the withdrawals assumed by indigenous North Americans and old order Amish communities, and noting value in more active, political approaches as well. “The political task of ‘resistance’ today then, beyond the quiet acts of personal withdrawal [Lewis] Mumford urged, is to try to make the culture of industrialism and its assumptions less invisible in industrial societies as well as their imitators.”

But many see the Neo-Luddite front as indication that the broad blindness assumed towards technology is both necessary and inseparable from civilization. “It's a necessary voice, but the movement is not at all capable of removing these things,” says Walter Truett Anderson, political scientist and author of *Evolution Isn't What it Used to Be*.

“A new technology comes along and after a while it comes to look like nature. The real ethical obligation is to think about ways to live within that context,” he says.

But Neo-Luddites see their approach as one vital to maintaining the checks and balances that should stand in the way of technological determinism—when technology dictates civilization's course and not the other way around.

According to Sale, the voice of Luddist reason remains an ethical imperative. Take the ex-

ample of computers: “There are two moral judgements against computers. One is that computerization enables the large forces of our civilization to operate more swiftly and efficiently in their pernicious goals of making money and producing things. . . . Secondly, in the course of using these, these forces are destroying nature with more speed and efficiency than ever before.”

Originally, ‘Luddite’ connoted membership in a riotous movement led in 1811 by independent English weavers, displaced by the advent of mechanized looms. Once priding themselves on the cottage industry nature of weaving, now forgone in favour of falling incomes and rocketing inflation, a group of weavers led by Ned Ludd—legend says nothing of whether there really ever existed a Ludd—rebelled, entering factories and destroying the looms of factory owners who failed to meet their demands for wages, working conditions, and quality control.

A year's work of ravaged factories in their wake, the ancestral movement met its demise when a planned revolt met resistance from military troops and hired guards. Several were killed in the fighting that ensued while several more were imprisoned or hanged following the enactment of legislative measures by the English House of Commons to quell Luddite activity.

“Today, in the second Industrial Revolution, it's just as it was back in the first. The technology itself simply does put people out of jobs,” says Sale of the significant bond he sees as uniting the first wave revolution with today's.

Indeed, Luddism also continues to take on a decidedly leftist stance politically, as much today as in the original workers' revolution. Sale hastens to call Luddism a Marxist ideology. Its modern day eco-consciousness has him echoing the notion of the green tree with red roots.

Nonetheless, the foundation of Luddism's revival on the two-century-old movement with which Neo-Luddism has aligned itself is almost superficial when considering its face today is vastly changed in several ways, even if some of its general aims have remained.

Neo-Luddism has allied itself with the Green movement in its contempt for industrialization. Large scale “envirocide” mars the boasts of today's industrial civilization in a way virtually un-

NEO-LUDDITE CONFRONTATION OF TECHNOLOGICAL DETERMINISM MAKES ITS CASE VIA THE VERY TECHNOLOGIES IT AIMS TO DESTROY

foreseen during the first Industrial Revolution. Now however, industry's environmental implications serve the same harming ends as technological unemployment, and to at least as great a degree.

Opposition to reproductive technology, activism aimed at environmental protection, and concerns for personal privacy in the face of security technology—Smith identifies these as inherently anti-technology movements. However, he believes that it would be a stretch to recognize them as Luddist trends.

"The original Luddite movement was particularly concerned with loss of jobs," Smith points out, adding that he is unfamiliar with the very notion of Neo-Luddism. "Workers in industry today realize that if there isn't investment in these industries, there will be no jobs at all."

Indeed, today's Luddism finds itself uniquely faced with concerns surrounding, for instance, technological sciences. Sale, for one, has declared the Neo-Luddist mission to be the dismantling of computer, chemical, and biogenetic technologies while opposition hails these sciences as invaluable advance to the course of humanity.

"Biotechnology has emerged as the great Satan. That's born of a certain amount of misunderstanding. It's a global scientific revelation," says Anderson.

Perhaps the greatest struggle in which Neo-Luddites find themselves at odds however, pits principle against pragmatism. While the first wave boasted union at its very core, the latter lacks any formal organization at all. And while its refusal to be coined as a movement goes hand-in-hand with its decided stance against attention from the very mainstream mediums which it condemns, it finds itself at a crossroads as a movement both seeking a voice and vehemently opposing the voice mediums.

"One of the failures of Luddism [is] its formlessness, its unintentionally [sic], its indistinctness about goals, desires, possibilities. If it is to be anything more than sporadic and martyristic, resistance could learn from the [first] Luddite experience at least how important it is to work out

some common analysis that is morally clear about the problematic present and the desirable future, and the common strategies that stem from it," says Sale.

It seems odd then, to anyone somehow extracting the nature of Luddism from the seeming information vacuum that surrounds it, that it does in fact have its "Cyber-Puritans." Yes, you can cruise your way to a www.luddites.com website, read the works of Sale and other Luddist thinkers, and even take an on-line Luddist Purity test. But does this evidence the refuge of "Liberal Luddism?"

Not really, according to Smith, again noting the distinct contentions held by today's Luddists. "Why would anyone concerned with implications of reproductive technology be concerned with the internet?" he asks, adding that Neo-Luddism's environmental interests are far from compromised by internet technology. Still, acceptance of global communications media into Luddist culture seems a step back from a broad-reaching anti-technology stance.

"I can't imagine where the anti-technology movement would be

today without the internet," says Anderson. "And internet technology has put a lot of people out of work too," he adds, pointing out a seeming double standard in the Neo-Luddist approach. He also speaks of a recent Neo-Luddite national conference in Ohio, to which media photographers were denied entrance, while a New York Times artist was allowed in to draw a sketch, shortly thereafter mass-printed and mass-distributed to millions.

What then is a Neo-Luddite to do in a society whose very activist movements are so exclusive as to deny assembly status and attention to those who won't submit to internet technology and its likes? What does it mean to be a Neo-Luddite if principles stand in the way of organizing against organization? The crusade seems reduced to reliance on a far less assertive stance than its forebearer, a moderate, even non-committal, and not at all absolutist stance against technology—one from which hard action is difficult to conceive. An activist's double-edged sword.

Nonetheless, there do remain Luddism's extremists. Kirkpatrick Sale made waves in the Luddite community recently in his analy-

sis of the Unabomber Manifesto (before Kaczynski's arrest and conviction) which points out the Luddite trends in the bomber's personality. "The Unabomber and I share a great many views about the pernicious effect of the Industrial Revolution, the evils of modern technologies, the stifling effect of mass society, the vast extent of suffering in a machine-dominated world and the inevitability of social and environmental catastrophe if the industrial system goes unchecked," Sale wrote in his article, *The Unabomber's Secret Treatise*.

But there remains no moral high ground that the Unabomber, or other fundamentalist Luddites, can assume apart from these "pernicious" technologies. "He made his bombs partly out of wood but used batteries to detonate them. He reviled the computer, but kept three typewriters, apparently unaware that the typewriter was once the epitome of high technology, reviled by the Luddites in its own time as the destroyer of the art of penmanship, the machine that would put honest scribes out of work," says Anderson. "This technological nostalgia appears to be one of the common features of Neo-

THE "BAD DAY" VIDEO CLIP WHICH SHOWS A MAN DESTROYING HIS COMPUTER HAS BECOME A POPULAR FORWARDED MESSAGE AMONG THE FRUSTRATED LUDDITE POPULATION

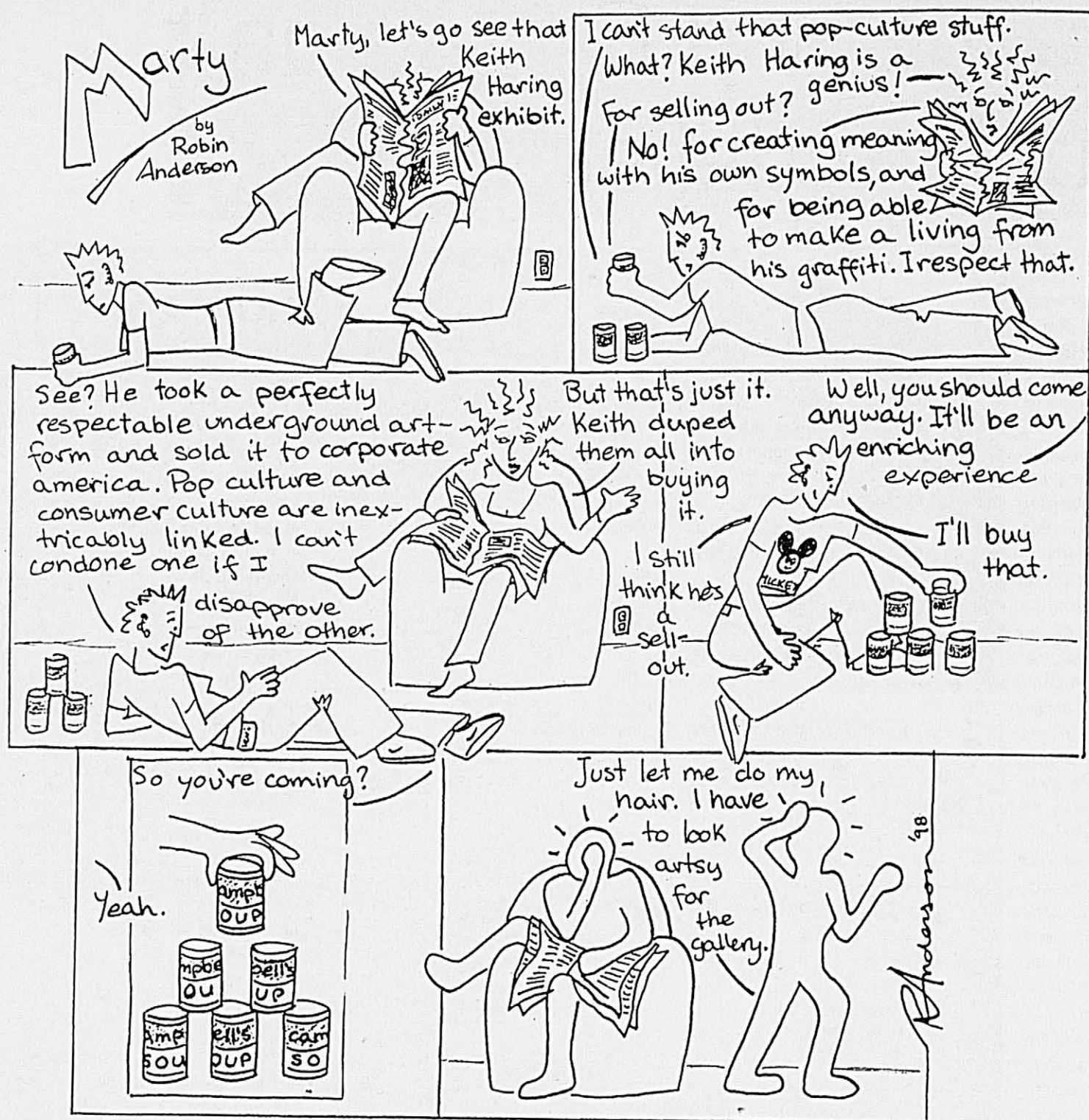
Luddism: earlier technologies take on the patina of time and begin to seem plain folksy and natural."

Today, Luddism can be seen in the otherwise unassuming attitudes of the enraged office employee wreaking havoc at his computer's expense, though you would be hard pressed to convince him that he was a "technophobe." Made to include in its ranks anyone who has ever been a reactionary against technology, whether by lashing out at a PC or by protesting the construction of a nuclear power plant, Luddism today seems to have many faces.

With files from The Nation, Hot Wired, and the Pacific News Service

Take the "Luddite Challenge" on page 10 to see if you have what it takes.....





THE LUDDITE PURITY TEST

(REPRINTED FROM WWW.LUDDITES.COM)

In this fragmented, post-modern world of exploding Powerbooks, nerdy millionaire presidential candidates and cheese-in-the-crust pizza, the Eternal Question takes on a poignant urgency: Who am I?

Of course, this question is often quickly followed by the life-affirming plea: What is my credit rating? For the latter, you must travel your own inner path to TSW (or any of the nationwide credit agencies). We can offer no advice in your search, except that those who procure a Luddites Online T-shirt will earn credit karma of the highest order.

But we digress.

In a global effort to ferret out the Hated Geeks that walk among us Faithful Luddites, we present the Luddite Purity Test. Hand-tabulated by illiterate

latch-key children in the suburbs of Orange County, California, your answers will determine your true status in the coming Deindustrial Revolution and subsequent Misinformation Age.

Answer all the questions below and then click on the button marked, "I hate submit buttons."

1) Which is the proper spelling and capitalization:

-InterNet
-internet
-Internet
-AOL

2) Do you find yourself regularly stressed out about cross-platform incompatibility?

-Yes
-No

3) If you were President,

which bill would you sign first:

-Double the minimum wage
-Free tuition at public universities
-Proficiency requirements for HTML authoring

4) Have you ever sabotaged anything at your work on purpose? I.e. if you work at a restaurant, have you ever creatively substituted ingredients in "the secret sauce?"

-Yes
-No

5) Would you trade your favourite chair for an unregulated free market economy?

-Yes
-No

6) Which did/could do more damage to society:

-The industrial revolu-

tion

-Legislated key-escrowed cryptography
-Patchoulie

7) Have you ever bought an electronic device just so you could open it up and see how it works?

-Yes
-No

8) Follow-up question: If so, in putting it back together, did you add new functionality just for kicks? I.e. when the Pop Tarts are done your toaster now broadcasts the news on selected law enforcement bands...

-Yes
-No

9) Do you ever dream of electric sheep?

-Yes
-No

10) Microsoft Windows is...

-a productivity-improving computing environment enhanced only by Microsoft's clever social interface "Bob."
-a triumphant product line modeled on the decade-old Macintosh interface.
-a cruel joke on humanity.

11) Do you think Marc Andresson is a more important figure in American history than 2/3rds of previous U.S. Presidents?

-Yes
-No

12) Do you think having a vehicle with big fat tires and a roll bar is more important than fuel efficiency?

-Yes
-No

Foucault and Clinton on the sexual battlefield

SEX AND POLITICS- THE MOST POTENT MIX SINCE THE CHURCH AND THE STATE

Timothy S. Fitzsimmons

If only Michel Foucault were with us now.

What would France's great philosopher and social critic say about the recent fiasco that splashed its ugly stain across every major media outlet in North America, one affectionately known as the Clinton/Lewinsky scandal? Other monikers include Lewinskygate, the Starr Report, or simply "That Clinton Impeachment Thing."

Apparently most of the American public decided to go with the last name, preferring instead to concentrate their attention on the fact that the Republican-controlled House of Congress had become so distracted from their work that they needed a good swift reminder that how much sex the President has relates little to the running of a country. Hence the "startling" election results, although anyone with a smidgen of sense could have seen them coming.

That the mass media reacted with such surprise betrays the large degree to which most political pundits operate apart from any sense of public sentiment. Even with poll after

poll returning results that showed that the public was not concerned with the affair nor even wanted to hear anymore about the Starr Report, the election results were greeted with a resounding smack—that of jaws hitting desks in editorial offices across the country. Notably in Minnesota, where former pro-wrestler Jesse "The Body" Ventura was elected Governor, but that itself is a whole other column.

But whither Foucault.

The problem with the Starr Report, which most of the American public seems to have known, is that the report itself was so obviously a thinly veiled attempt to pass moral judgement on Clinton through the official and authorial channels of the mass media.

The dominant discourse, that of Starr politics, had failed to find anything which might prove to be the pry bar that rends Clinton from the bosom of his citizens. Once sexual conduct fell under Starr's jurisdiction (again, a whole other saga in itself), all of Clinton's sexual past seemed to be fair game. Clinton's former lovers could be summoned, coerced, or in Lewinsky's case, detained by the FBI and intimidated into plea bargaining.

The office of the independent counsel had finally gotten its teeth into something which could prove unseemly enough to undo Clinton and get the public indignant. In a huge oversight, though, Starr deluded himself into believing that all those voices from the Christian Right, who happened to be footing the \$40 million investigation tab, were representative of the nation's wishes.

The election sure changed that.

Instead of gaining additional seats that would basically guarantee the Republican-led impeachment proceedings, the Republicans lost seats, lost the Speaker of the House, and created an entire cottage industry of cartoon characters and new language, altering the direction of political discourse forever.

This past Halloween the most popular costume was, of course, the Monica Lewinsky mask, complete with beret. And if you wanted that added touch of authenticity you could wear the blue dress (sans spinach dip stains). Also available for your party pleasure were Clinton and Starr.

Book deals abound for all involved in the vaudeville show, and

to top it off, the Starr report itself was published in book form, leading to some of the most hilarious reviews in ages.

The players in this overblown drama were regularly skewered in the cartoons of the dailies and nightly talkshows became unwatchable simply because the jokes delivered by Leno, Letterman et al. were much less humorous than the daily emanations from the Starr camp.

Reading through the national paper (The Globe and Mail) the other day, there appeared the word "Lewinskyfication" in an op-ed piece. As in: the election had undergone a Lewinskyfication. New language indeed.

Foucault must be howling in his grave. If he pegged the issue all those years ago in his work *The History of Sexuality*, I can't imagine another more obvious example than today's events to illustrate his main points. Whereas previously sexual discourse had been co-opted by dominant hegemonic interests in order to exercise power and begin the long process of the pathologization of sexual behavior, Starr, taking the posi-

tion of the underdog, has turned the tables on those in power and inverted Foucault's equation. Not only would the indignant Starr and his backers like to see Clinton removed from power, but on his way out they would like to give him a good hard smack on his bare ass.

That the citizens of the US didn't go for this witchhunt, and actually grew sicker of the coverage each day, indicates that maybe there do remain limits to how far these discourses will overlap. With Starr having let the cat out of the bag though, the media will never be the same. Now it is not enough to discuss presidential behaviour in the news section, but it must be communicated in full color, detail and in all its graphic glory.

The American obsession with political personalities has far exceeded simple (war) hero worship. Knowing how the battles are won is no longer enough. Now the troops not only want the general's strategy for the battlefield, but also the knowledge of what goes on in his tent at the end of the day. And further, they want to tell him how to do it.

Foucault would love this.

13) Do you feel that workers' physical and emotional energy is subsumed by an uncaring, inhumane, assembly-line, capitalist economy, or do you feel that Bob Dole needs to "get serious"?

.....Workers oppressed by Capitalism
.....Dole too nice

14) True or false: Life was better before sliced bread.

.....True
.....False

15) Can you name three differences between Perl 4.0 and Perl 5.0?

.....Yes
.....No

16) Did you find the movie *Brazil* to be a haunting allegory of our hopeless bureaucratic society, or a blueprint for a better tomorrow?

.....haunting allegory
.....blueprint

17) Do you consider "geek" a term of endearment?

.....Yes
.....No

18) Which is a greater threat to the Internet?

.....Pornography
.....Time Magazine

19) People are best understood as....

.....complicated individuals with feelings and aspirations.
.....things to make things you can sell.

20) Do you read mail order computer catalogs in the bathroom?

.....Yes
.....No

21) The revolution....

.....will not be televised.
.....is an out-moded form of political action.
.....is currently in beta testing and will be released in time for the '96 holiday season.

22) Robots are....

.....a fanciful element from science fiction.
.....cool.
.....running the show.

23) Society as a whole would be better off without....

.....poverty.
.....censorship.
.....refrigeration.

24) Who do you admire most:

.....Noam Chomsky
.....Bill Gates
.....The Borg

25) www.suck.com....

.....insightfully skewers net culture.
.....is a sell-out.
.....huh?
.....uses some cool scripts.

26) Which is more true:

.....The Internet fosters increased communication and democratic dialogue among people all over the world.
.....Computers are no replacement for real human interaction.

.....I met my spouse online.

27) Do you check your e-mail before you get dressed in the morning?

.....Yes
.....No

28) Have you gotten the

Neiman-Marcus cookie recipe forwarded to you via e-mail more than once?

.....Yes
.....No

29) Follow-up: Have you forwarded the Neiman-Marcus cookie recipe to others via e-mail (warning: this is now illegal in some countries)?

.....Yes
.....No

30) Bookstores are useful for...

.....browsing the latest book on organic composting.
.....browsing the latest book on navigating the Internet.
.....selling my latest book on navigating the Internet.

Television: the Drug of a Nation

by Tal Pinchevsky

The other day I found myself absolutely immersed in nostalgia. Through a series of internal memory trips I could hear George Fenneman introducing Groucho Marx on "You Bet Your Life," Jack Benny playing his violin in that sardonic and squawking style whose technicalities were known exclusively by him, and Dick Clark shaping the musical interests of a generation of youth. (If what I just said is nothing more than foreign jargon to you, ask your parents!)

What would inspire this reminiscence of an epoch past in which values were wholesome and television media, to a certain extent, was still in a primordial stage of virginal innocence? Quite frankly, it is the contemporary media's lack of any semblance of quality programming that causes this time warp. Today's programmers would never book Benny Goodman and Ella Fitzgerald on a show entitled "Swing Into Spring." Though their respective deaths might play some role in this truism, it is not at the scale one might suspect.

In all honesty Howdy Doody scares me and, for some odd reason, Pat Boone's voice causes the bile to rise in my throat, but there must be some sort of happy median between these idealistic times and the full-blown chaos that reigns on picture tubes all over the world.

Cable television has emerged as a prominent media outlet in today's technologically advancing times, and standards are at an all time low as American programmers sharpen their claws and pad their wallets in their efforts to proliferate any garbage that might seem to compensate with style for what it more than lacks in substance.

Not to say that today's programming is bereft of any integrity or innovation. I, for one, am quite enthralled by every passing scene of a fine show called *The Simpsons*. This quasi-obsession has actually progressed to the point of my attaining some sort of nerdish tendencies (i.e. discussing favourite scenes, characters, episodes on a whim), an idea that those who know me will testify is inconceivable.

Truth be told, the act of watching television in itself is inherently lethargic, the programs are meditations on the medium itself. The act of watching television is, after all, about how to pass the time while doing absolutely nothing physically and, to a lesser extent, intellectually. Like the rest of you I do watch television on an almost daily basis and I do not display any guilt for doing so. Although this perhaps places my argument to this point on shaky ground, I will further demonstrate the evils of today's television broadcasting media.

In the Children's Television Protection and Education Act of 1995, the United States Congress came to some fairly alarming conclusions. For one, they found that, by the time the average student graduates from high school, they have

spent more time watching television than in the classroom; this statistic seems even more dangerous when considered in conjunction with their further discoveries. Congress also concluded that commercial television licenses have a legal obligation to public service to children, an obligation that has been inadequately fulfilled. Title 1, Section 2.6 of this act clearly states "commercial television has inadequately met its obligation to provide educational and informational programming to children as a crucial part of its obligation to serve the public interest, and this has occurred despite the enactment of the Children's Television Act of 1990." Providing more quantitative ideas, Title 3 of this act notes that the Ameri-

Standards are at an all time low as American programmers sharpen their claws and pad their wallets in their efforts to proliferate any garbage that might seem to compensate with style for what it more than lacks in substance.

can Psychological Association estimates that the average child witnesses 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school. I suppose that most university students could tolerate these facts if they themselves were being entertained as adults, which also hasn't occurred.

Though I do not claim my opinion speaks for the general population, but is anyone out there really being genuinely entertained by the average nightly television lineup that blends an equilateral mix of the pretentious, predictable, and boring? How many times must we suffer through a so-called "situation comedy" that is neither comedic nor realistic in the situation it presents? Are we to spend the rest of our viewing lives sifting through narcoleptic, androgynous, Nazi-hooker-strippers on Jerry Springer and the "World's Greatest Speedboat Chase, Disaster-Striking, Building-Crushing, Car-Wrecking Natural Disasters?"

Mind you, television has displayed some evident and mature



JAZZ MEETS SWING IN A HISTORICAL BROADCASTING MOMENT

growth over the past fifty years. As our broadcasting standards have teetered further towards

the left, our society has followed. One of the pivotal moments in this growing process was the television series *Maude*, a spin-off of the hugely successful *All in the Family*, which had already addressed the issues of homosexuality, miscarriage, race, female equality, and co-habitation. In 1972 Beatrice Arthur's *Maude*, who eventually became the popular character Dorothy Zbornak on *The Golden Girls*, dealt with an unwanted pregnancy by having an abortion. This controversial series of episodes opened the floodgates for television's boundaries, which were quite conservative at the time.

Today's broadcasting has moved so far left and brought its viewing audience with it, that it appears it is about to come full-circle. In the public's brain-swelling, eye-bulging, drool-spewing need for this outrageous subject matter that we are now subjected to, these shows once considered taboo are now viewed as quite droll in their attempts to shock. Television viewers have become so immersed in these new broadcasting values that they are beginning to demand an even more shocking medium. This progression is only further aided by the widespread use of video cameras for personal use that makes easily accessible the fifteen minutes

of fame that Andy Warhol spoke so fondly of.

To draw a comparison, the Roman empire, as it basked in its own brilliance, attempted to further its empire by entertaining citizens with many public sporting events (i.e. track and field, wrestling, etc.). Over time, in order to further appease this demanding public, these sports were enhanced by pitting man against man as well as beast in a battle to the death. As the Romans began to avidly attend these adorned sporting events, their empire began to slowly crumble. Is this a fair analogy? Does a broadcasting lineup of professional wrestling and other pure forms of brain fodder mark the end of our illustrious civilization? Maybe, but probably not, we can't possibly be furthering the dominance of our species, however.

Over time, the intentions of our old friend television have been maladjusted in the purging efforts of many corporate players. A marketable viewing image appeals far more to most

programmers than anything with some sort of intellectual standard. Yes, there are many cable stations, most notably the Discovery and Learning Channels, that do demonstrate good intentions in their programming and television has yet to be marked by the FDA as an illicit drug, but the Western world is entering a definite cultural crisis. So if you really want to aid your society in eliminating this crisis watch the news, take up a new hobby, and, if you do watch television, watch me. After all, I haven't had my fifteen minutes yet.



THE NELSONS: A T.V. MAINSTAY FOR ALMOST TEN YEARS

TV CULTURE

THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY DRUG OF CHOICE

by Sameer Dossani

Yes! Finally! After twenty two years of wrestling with crappy rabbit ears, I finally got the cable installed. And let me tell you, it's the best thirty two dollars a month I've ever spent. Now I can see *Bev*, *The X-Files*, *Dawson's Creek*, *Xena: Warrior Princess*, and - let's not forget - *The Simpsons* everyday and twice on Sundays. I want my MTV, BET, TNT, and my FOX and my Showtime. Yeah!

AND WHO THE FUCK CARES if programmers have to meet the needs of advertisers and give us sex-and-violence trash instead of something that might make us think? Who cares if television was first made available in post WW2 America in order to keep people consuming at war time rates and not fall back into a (shhhh!) depression? (Think happy thoughts, think happy thoughts.) Who cares if the only reason TV exists at all is because companies want to make sure they sell us more than we would ever need in order to keep their profits up and our pockets empty while over twenty per cent of Canadian children live below the poverty line? I *do* need my inflatable basketball shoes and my cell phone and my Tommy H. raincoat and my CK underwear.

AND WHO THE FUCK CARES if its been known for years that blue flickering light is an ideal setting for all kinds of subliminal suggestions and brainwashing? I saw someone get brainwashed at a magic show once. He thought he

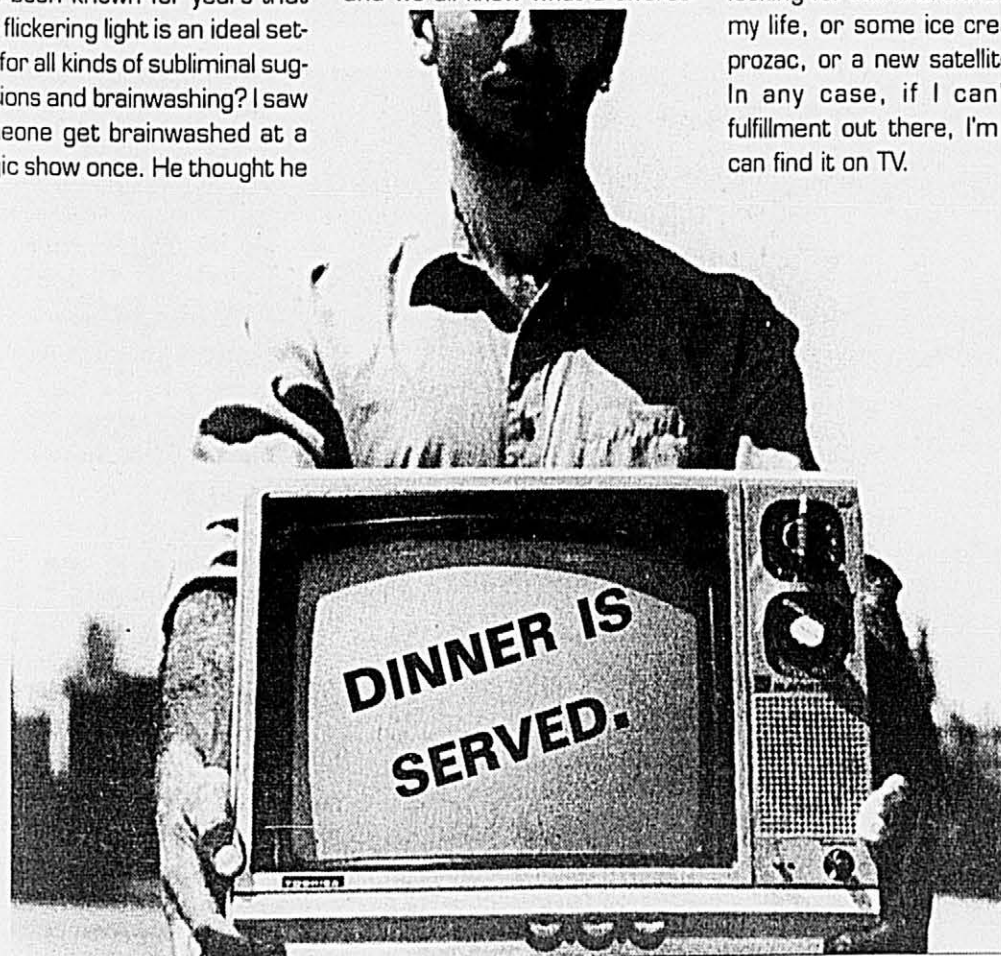
was a chicken and broke his nose looking for worms. It was cool. And besides, we are way too hip and suave and sophisticated and new age to be fooled by a couple of half-naked, air-brushed, photoshopped, seventeen-year-olds.

AND WHO THE FUCK CARES if every time I see one of those walking mannequins, those all-sexuality-and-no-personality, one-sided supermodels, I get closer and closer to believing that women are objects who are there for the amusement and edification of men, the valiant heroes of our strip-mall, sit-com society? Who cares if my girlfriend's anorexic and refuses to see a shrink or to go out to dinner with me because she knows that I have no idea what it means to be female and I'm just going to yell at her like some stupid insensitive moron and tell her that she's fucked up because she won't eat and she'll run crying to the washroom and wonder how her life got this messed up? Hey, there's still Ally McBeal and Agent Scully, right?

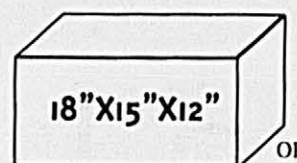
AND WHO THE FUCK CARES if every single one of those 73 channels I just bought are owned by one of ten corporations? (And they told me TV was homogeneous!) Why, this means that any given show must be approved by one of ten white male billionaires, and we all know what a diverse

bunch they are! Who cares if those billionaires make 100 times as much as their white-male-upper-middle-class lackeys who find new and exciting shows to give to us rich kids so that they'll make more money from the advertisers who will pay more for us than for working class orphans on native reservations because we have more purchasing power? Who cares if those lackeys are paid 100,000 times more than the factory workers in Korea and Taiwan who make the TVs in the first place? Those economists know what they're doing, and I'm sure we have a fair and just economic system, or at least that's what I'll say until my parents cut the cord and I'm left on the street with an arts degree and a pile of debts, ready to steal from the first businessman who comes my way, so I can escape this living hell to which we've resigned ourselves.

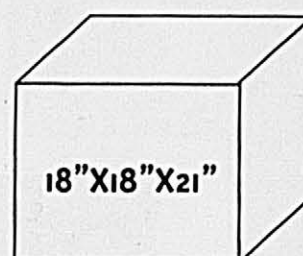
Yeah, life is good. If I didn't have to go to school, I would probably spend all my time in front of the tube, seeing people do wacky stuff like screw each other; or go out on a Beverly Hills night; or answer crazy questions on Hollywood Squares; or Jeopardy. On the other hand, maybe I should spend more of my time outside looking for the Marcia Brady of my life, or some ice cream, or prozac, or a new satellite dish. In any case, if I can't find fulfillment out there, I'm sure I can find it on TV.



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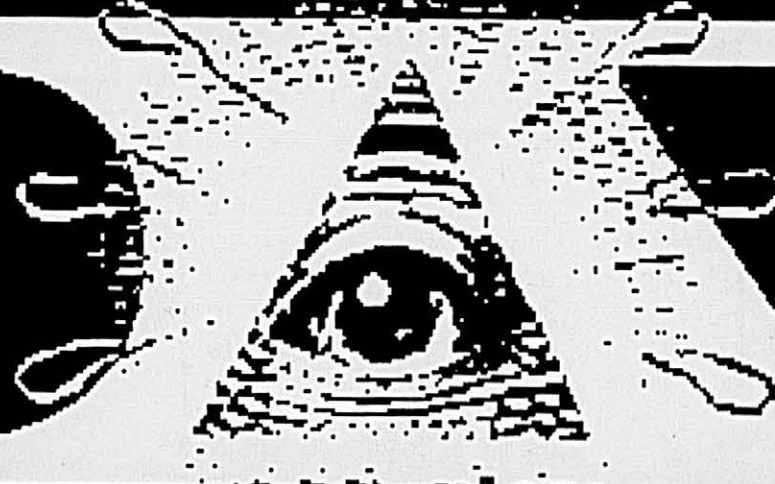
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Wednesday, November 25

9:30-4:00 Info kiosks on alternative consumption choices in Shatner Building Rm 107/8.

Film screening 7pm, "Who's Counting" exposes the inadequacies and injustices of economic valuation mechanisms. McConnell Eng Rm 304.

Friday November 27

11:00- 6:00 Workshops in Leacock 232:

11:30-12:30 "Responsible Consumption"

12:30-2:15 "Radical Economics"

2:30-4:00 "Interaction of market & social economy"

4:00-6:00 "Third World Dept Problems"

6:30- Demonstration in Phillips Square- Activist Caroling in streets and major shopping malls in Downtown.

More events and info can be obtained at the GPIRG website:

<http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/qpirg>

Beyond the Roddick Gates...

Friday November 27

10:00 Demonstration Downtown to raise general awareness about our consumption and its social and environmental repercussions.

5:30 Meet at Phillip Squares for caroling through the streets and shopping malls

daily classifieds

Ads may be placed through the Daily Business Office, Room B-07, University Centre, 9h00-14h00. Deadline is 14h00, two working days prior to publication. McGill Students & Staff (with valid ID): \$4.75 per day, 3 or more consecutive days, \$4.25 per day. General Public: \$6.00 per day, or \$5.00 per day for 3 or more consecutive days. Extra charges may apply, prices include applicable GST or PST. Full payment should accompany your advertising order and may be made in cash or by personal cheque (for amounts over \$20 only). For more information, please visit our office or call 398-6790. WE CANNOT TAKE CLASSIFIED ADS OVER THE PHONE. PLEASE CHECK YOUR AD CAREFULLY WHEN IT APPEARS IN THE PAPER. The Daily assumes no financial responsibility for errors, or damages due to errors. Ad will re-appear free of charge upon request if information is incorrect due to our error. The Daily reserves the right not to print any classified ad.

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